



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/977,069	10/11/2001	G. Ramanath	020752-000121US	9488
20350	7590	11/24/2003	EXAMINER	
TOWNSEND AND TOWNSEND AND CREW, LLP TWO EMBARCADERO CENTER EIGHTH FLOOR SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-3834			KIELIN, ERIK J	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2813	

DATE MAILED: 11/24/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/977,069

Applicant(s)

RAMANATH ET AL.

Examiner

Erik Kielin

Art Unit

2813

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 September 2003.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 6-11 and 13-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) none is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 6-11 and 13-19 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

This action responds to the Amendment file 11 September 2003 (Paper no. 16).

Information Disclosure Statement

1. Examiner acknowledges Applicant's remarks in response to the objection to the IDS that an IDS had been filed about one month prior to the mailing of the first Office action on the merits. This IDS was not, however, matched with the application until after mailing of the action and Examiner was clearly unaware that such IDS existed. Examiner apologizes on behalf of the Office for any inconvenience.

Nonetheless, the information disclosure statement filed 18 July 2002 fails to comply with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.97, 1.98 and MPEP § 609 because some of the references have not been provided with dates in accordance with 37 CFR 1.98(b)(5). Also the MPEP 609 states,

“Each publication must be identified by publisher, author (if any), title, relevant pages of the publication, and **date** and place of publication. The date of publication supplied must include at least the **month and year** of publication, except that **the year of publication (without the month) will be accepted if the applicant points out in the information disclosure statement that the year of publication is sufficiently earlier than the effective U.S. filing date and any foreign priority date so that the particular month of publication is not in issue.**” (Emphasis added.)

The IDS has been placed in the application file, but only the references initialed by Examiner have been considered. Applicant is advised that the date of any re-submission of any item of information contained in this information disclosure statement or the submission of any missing element(s) will be the date of submission for purposes of determining compliance with the

requirements based on the time of filing the statement, including all certification requirements for statements under 37 CFR 1.97(e). See MPEP § 609 ¶ C(1).

This is repeated from the Office action filed 25 February 2003.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 6-8 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 5,079,600 (**Schnur** et al.) in view of ASM Handbook Vol. 5, Surface Engineering, ASM International: Materials Park, Ohio, 1994, pp. 315-318, and the basic textbook by **Porterfield**, Inorganic Chemistry, A Unified Approach, Addison-Wesley: Reading, Massachusetts, 1984, pp. 487-488.

Regarding claim 6, **Schnur** discloses a semiconductor device comprising,

(a) a substrate (Fig. 1A);

(b) a diffusion barrier (Fig. 1A, called "thin film"), wherein the diffusion barrier comprises a self-assembled monolayer, SAM, (col. 10, lines 42-47) including a plurality of molecules, each molecule having an aromatic group at the terminus of the molecule. (For example, EXAMPLE 28 at col. 21, discloses a SAM formed from trichloro-(4-pyridyl)-ethyl-silane which forms the equivalent SAM barrier layer as shown in structure entitled "1" on p. 7 of the instant specification. The pyridyl is an aromatic group.

(c) a metal layer (called "catalyst" and "metal layer") on the diffusion barrier.

In pertinent part, **Schnur** states in col. 20,

"EXAMPLE 24

"Fabrication of MOS capacitor test structures.

"An n-type silicon wafer with a 100 nm thick thermal oxide layer was cleaned and treated with UTF3 as in example 14. The film was patterned using a mask with standard capacitor test structures and irradiated for 28 minutes with an Hg/Ar lamp. The wafer was metallized with the standard copper plating procedures, used in Example 5, yielding metal squares 800 microns on a side ($\text{area}=6 \times 10^{-3} \text{ cm}^2$). The metal/thermal oxide/n-type silicon (MOS) capacitors were then characterized by probing the metal pads and the back of the wafer with a Micromanipulator automatic C-V measuring system. The capacitance was found to be 26 pF/cm² with minimal (10 mV) hysteresis and remained stable at room temperature for at over 3 weeks, indicating that device degradation due to masked metal contamination (**diffusion of copper into the thermal oxide**) was not a **problem**. (Emphasis added.)

Accordingly, it is seen to be inherent that the SAM of **Schnur** is a diffusion barrier because **Schnur** states that "diffusion of copper into the thermal oxide" does not occur.

(See also section entitled, "Summary of the Invention") the sections entitled "EXAMPLE 1" col. 11, lines 24-58 wherein the barrier layer is formed from "octenyldimethylchlorosilane" covalently bonded to the substrate. See also "EXAMPLE 3" and "EXAMPLE 5.")

Schnur does not teach that the catalyst is copper, thereby having the limitation that "for each molecule of the plurality of molecules, the copper in the metal layer is in direct contact with the aromatic group of the molecule."

ASM Handbook teaches that copper may be used as a catalyst for electroless plating of copper (pp. 315-318 --especially p. 318 sections entitled, "Catalyzation" and "Copper catalyst"). The basic textbook of **Porterfield** ensures that copper forms metal complexes with pyridine

Art Unit: 2813

groups, such as the pyridine group used in **Schnur** as the polar end-group of each molecule in the SAM barrier layer.

It would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention to use copper as the metal catalyst in **Schnur** as taught in the **ASM Handbook** because **Schnur** is not limited to Pd/Sn catalysts, as at least claim 1 of **Schnur** makes clear, and because copper is a known catalyst for electroless copper plating, as used in **Schnur**, as taught by the **ASM Handbook**. In this regard, it has been held that the selection of a known material based upon its suitability for an intended purpose is obvious. Moreover, the **ASM Handbook** teaches that copper-based catalyst are less expensive than palladium-based catalyst, thereby providing additional motivation to use copper for cost savings.

Schnur only requires that the catalyst bond to polar end group of the molecule which is the pyridyl end group of "Example 28" in **Schnur**. **Porterfield** ensures that such bonding occurs, such that one of ordinary skill has a reasonable expectation of success for using copper instead of Pd/Sn, as the catalyst in **Schnur**. Accordingly, using copper as the catalyst gives the limitation, that "for each molecule of the plurality of molecules, the copper in the metal layer is in direct contact with the aromatic group of the molecule."

Regarding claim 7, as noted above, Example 24 in **Schnur** states that the substrate is a silicon wafer with silicon oxide formed thereon.

Regarding claim 8, **Schnur** discloses the linear carbon chain of trichloro-(4-pyridyl)-ethyl-silane is the ethyl group, which has at least 2 carbon atoms.

Regarding claim 10, it is held absent evidence to the contrary, that the diffusion barrier of **Schnur** is capable of preventing the diffusion of metal atoms from the metal layer into the

Art Unit: 2813

substrate when the semiconductor device is exposed to thermal annealing at 200 °C or an electric field of 2 MV/cm at 200 °C in flowing N₂. Basis for this reasoning is that Applicant is using the exact same SAM, as is **Schnur** to form the barrier layer. **Schnur** also points out in Example 24 that copper diffusion does not occur even under the stress of an electric field. See *In re Swinhart*, 169 USPQ 226,229 (CCPA 1971) (where the Patent Office has reason to believe that a functional limitation asserted to be critical for establishing novelty in the claimed subject matter may, in fact, be an inherent characteristic of the prior art, it possesses the authority to require the applicant to prove that subject matter shown to be in the prior art does not possess the characteristics relied on) and *In re Fitzgerald*, 205 USPQ 594 (CCPA 1980) (the burden of proof can be shifted to the applicant to show that subject matter of the prior art does not possess the characteristic relied on whether the rejection is based on inherency under 35 USC 102 or obviousness under 35 USC 103). Note that as long as there is evidence of record establishing inherency, failure of those skilled in the art to contemporaneously recognize an inherent property, function or ingredient of a prior art reference does not preclude a finding of anticipation. *Atlas Powder Co. v. IRECO, Inc.*, 190 F.3d 1342, 1349, 51 USPQ2d 1943, 1948 (Fed. Cir. 1999) (Two prior art references disclosed blasting compositions containing water-in-oil emulsions with identical ingredients to those claimed, in overlapping ranges with the claimed composition. The only element of the claims arguably not present in the prior art compositions was “sufficient aeration . . . entrapped to enhance sensitivity to a substantial degree.” The Federal Circuit found that the emulsions described in both references would inevitably and inherently have “sufficient aeration” to sensitize the compound in the claimed ranges based on the evidence of record (including test data and expert testimony). This finding of inherency was

Art Unit: 2813

not defeated by the fact that one of the references taught away from air entrapment or purposeful aeration.). See also *In re King*, 801 F.2d 1324, 1327, 231 USPQ 136, 139 (Fed. Cir. 1986); *Titanium Metals Corp. v. Banner*, 778 F.2d 775, 782, 227 USPQ 773, 778 (Fed. Cir. 1985).

Regarding claim 12, the metal layer is in direct contact with the terminal groups of the molecules in self-assembled monolayer (Fig. 1A). Note that the “catalyst” is a metal and therefore forms part of the “metal layer.”

4. Claims 9, 11, and 13-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Schnur** in view of the **ASM Handbook** and **Porterfield**, as applied to claims 6-8 and 10 above, and further in view of **Wolf**, et al. Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Vol. 1-Process Technology, 2nd ed., Lattice Press: Sunset Beach CA, 2000, pp. 438, 782-783.

Regarding claims 9 and 13, **Schnur** discloses each of the claimed features, as explained above, but does not indicate that the metal layer is deposited by a vapor deposition process, using in the exemplary embodiments, electroplating. **Schnur** does, however, indicate that the metal deposition method is for use in interconnect for semiconductor microcircuitry (Abstract, Example 25 in col. 20.)

The basic textbook of **Wolf**, teaches that copper metal interconnect may be deposited by a variety of methods, including electroplating and vapor deposition methods such as PVD (e.g. sputtering) and CVD. (See pp. 782-783--especially p. 783, last paragraph before section 15.8.2.)

It would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention to use a vapor deposition process, such as sputtering to deposit the metal layer in **Schnur**,

Art Unit: 2813

because vapor deposition processes (i.e. PVD and CVD) are an art recognized equivalent means to the electroplating used in **Schnur** to form copper interconnect, as taught by **Wolf**.

Regarding claim 11, in Example 25 (col. 20) in **Schnur** the diffusion barrier coats the walls of a polysilicon steps, but it is unclear if the metal fills a hole in the substrate. But as noted above, **Schnur** states that the method is used for interconnect.

The basic textbook of **Wolf** teaches that copper interconnect fills a hole in a substrate lined with a barrier layer to form interconnect for semiconductor microcircuitry (Fig. 15-52, pp. 782-783).

It would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention to form the metal interconnect of **Schnur** in a hole, because **Wolf** teaches that this is standard practice in the art to form copper interconnect.

Regarding claims 14 and 18, as noted above with respect to claim 7, Example 24 in **Schnur** states that the substrate is a silicon wafer with silicon oxide formed thereon.

Regarding claim 15, as noted above with respect to claim 8, **Schnur** discloses that the linear carbon chain of trichloro-(4-pyridyl)-ethyl-silane is the ethyl group, which has at least 2 carbon atoms.

Regarding claim 16, although **Schnur** does not teach sputtering, as noted above with respect to claim 9, **Wolf** teaches that PVD (of which sputtering is a member; **Wolf**, p. 438) is an art recognized means to electroplating to deposit metal films for interconnect.

It would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention to use a vapor deposition process, such as sputtering to deposit the metal layer in **Schnur**,

because vapor deposition processes (i.e. PVD and CVD) are an art recognized equivalent means to the electroplating used in **Schnur** to form copper interconnect, as taught by **Wolf**.

Regarding claims 17 and 19, it is held, absent evidence to the contrary, that the diffusion barrier of **Schnur** is capable of preventing the diffusion of metal atoms from the metal layer into the substrate when the semiconductor device is exposed to thermal annealing at 200 °C or an electric field of 2 MV/cm at 200 °C in flowing N₂ (claim 17) and that the semiconductor device does not exhibit $j_{\text{leakage}} > 1000 \text{ nAcm}^{-2}$ when the semiconductor device is exposed to thermal annealing at 200 °C or an electric field of 2 MV/cm in flowing N₂ at 200 °C for up to 650 minutes (claim 19). The basis for this reasoning is the same as applied to claim 10 above whose arguments are incorporated herein in their entirety. In short, equivalent structures must be capable of serving the same function. The structures in the instant specification are equivalent to those disclosed in **Schnur**.

Response to Arguments

5. Applicant's arguments filed 11 September 2003 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that the ASM Handbook teaches away from the use of copper catalysts. Examiner respectfully but emphatically disagrees for two reasons. While Examiner acknowledges that the ASM Handbook indicates that there exists a "major disadvantage," the ASM Handbook in the two sentences directly preceeding that sentence quoted from the ASM Handbook by Applicant states,

*"Copper catalyst: Because **palladium is more expensive** than the less noble metals (such as copper and nickel) that are known to be*

Art Unit: 2813

autocatalytic, there have been numerous attempts to develop a viable catalyst based on one of these metals. **A copper-tin colloidal catalyst was first reported in 1976 (Ref 59) and has proven commercially successful in a number of installations.** (Italicized emphasis in original; bold emphasis added.)

Accordingly, not only has the “major disadvantage” apparently been successfully avoided -- owing to the proven commercial success of copper-tin catalyst-- one of ordinary skill gains the added benefit of a less expensive material than palladium which will save money, as is always highly desired in the highly competitive art of semiconductor device manufacturing.

For this reason, it is improper for Applicant to argue,

“There is **no motivation** to modify Schnur et al. with the teachings of ASM, because the cited references explicitly teach away from the modification proposed by the Examiner.” (Emphasis added.)

This statement is factually in error given that the ASM Handbook suggests the proposed modification to save money and that copper-based catalysts have been proven commercially successful. Rather Applicant has ignored the express teachings of the ASM Handbook and has taken a single sentence out of context as if that were all the ASM Handbook were teaching.

Applicant's arguments regarding the vapor deposition are noted. They are not considered persuasive because method limitations do not have patentable weight in device claims. Note that a “product by process” claim is directed to the product per se, no matter how actually made, *In re Hirao*, 190 USPQ 15 at 17 (footnote 3). See also *In re Brown*, 173 USPQ 685; *In re Luck*, 177 USPQ 523; *In re Fessmann*, 180 USPQ 324; *In re Avery*, 186 USPQ 161; *In re Wertheim*, 191 USPQ 90 (209 USPQ 554 does not deal with this issue); *In re Marosi et al*, 218 USPQ 289; and particularly *In re Thorpe*, 227 USPQ 964, all of which make it clear that it is the patentability of the final product per se which must be determined in a “product by process” claim, and not the

patentability of the process, and that an old or obvious product produced by a new method is not patentable as a product, whether claimed in "product by process" claims or not. Note that applicant has the burden of proof in such cases, as the above case law make clear.

The article provided by Applicant is not germane to the instant case because the metal being deposited is a Fe-Ni alloy --not copper. Moreover, the film is not being deposited on the given seed layer. Absent evidence that sputter deposited copper films and electroplated copper films on the Schnur barrier layer are different, the evidence will not be considered persuasive.

Finally it is noted that the inventive feature of the instant invention is the use of the self-assembled monolayer as barrier layer. The manner in which the copper is depositing has not been indicated to be critical to the instant invention and is not considered novel. (See instant specification p. 2, section entitled, "Summary of the Invention.") Schnur discloses the exact same barrier layer as is presently being claimed.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event,

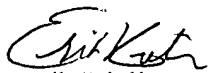
Art Unit: 2813

however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Erik Kielin whose telephone number is 703-306-5980. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00 - 19:30 on Monday through Thursday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Carl Whitehead, Jr., can be reached at 703-308-4940. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-872-9318 for regular communications and 703-872-9319 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0956.



Erik Kielin
Primary Examiner
November 22, 2003